University of Waterloo

DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Project Report:

Finding spam comments within the Yelp dataset

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Introduction

Every year Yelp releases their extensive dataset to the public to analyse and try to find interesting trends or draw new conclusions about their users or businesses listed on there. This provides us an ideal dataset to study and analyse for ECE656 since it is such a large and diverse dataset it means that there are several different conclusions that can be found and some potential irregularities in their database structure that we can improve upon.

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This part explains the general running environment of this project and how the codes are organized.

Part I. Data processing

- Part I 1.1 Database structure
 - To start we did a basic analysis of the database configuration, including sketching the Entity-Relationship Diagram and the relational model diagram.
- Part I 1.2 Data cleaning
 - Sanity and consistency checks are performed in this part to ensure that the data entered in the tables makes logical sense and doesn't contain any erroneous entries. The illegal data are removed from the database or updated. It also includes a comparion of sanity checking queries run time between indexed and unindexed database.
- Part I 1.3 Data analysis
 - For this part we analyse factors that increase the chance for a review to be spam or paid for to either raise or lower a business' rating. This includes looking at how long a user too between creating their account and leaving a review as spammers will generally create many accounts and leave a positive or negative review immediately and then leave the account dormant. Also, running time comparison is performed on the related analysis SQL queries.

Part II. User control

Given 5 different groups of users, we determined the least permissions they need on the database to conduct their work, and finished the granting privilege queries on this yelp database.

Part 0. General settings

This report is written in Jupyter Notebook, and all SQL queries are exectuted as python script. Therefore, it follows the sequence of code executing, and all codes share the same namespace.

Comparison between the run time with and without indexes/keys is integrated with cleaning/analysis part after each queries are executed.

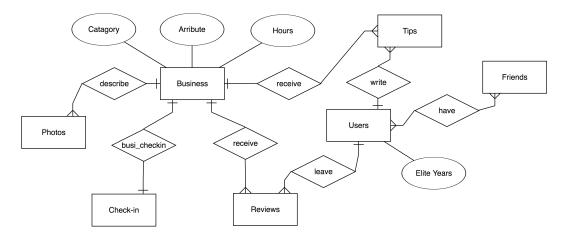
The database server is set up on Amazon Web Service (AWS). The address and other related information can be found below.

Here are the general scripts used through the whole project:

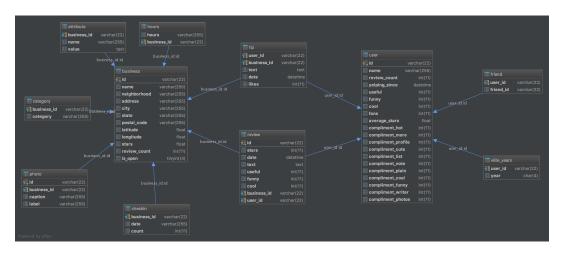
```
Python
"""Display settings"""
from IPython.display import HTML, display
import tabulate
def displayResult(queryResult, heading=()):
    if heading != ():
       resultList = (heading,) + queryResult
       display(HTML(tabulate.tabulate([result for result in resultList], tablefmt='html')))
        display(HTML(tabulate.tabulate([result for result in queryResult], tablefmt='html')))
import pymysql
def open_conn():
    conn = pymysql.connect(user='public', password='ece656yelp',
                                  database='yelp_db')
    return conn
    """close the connection after each test case"""
def executeQuery(conn, query, commit=False, returnResult=True):
    cursor = conn.cursor()
    query_num = query.count(";")
    if query num > 1:
       if not returnResult:
           cursor.execute(query)
            for result in cursor.execute(query, params=None, multi=True):
                if result.with rows:
                   result = result.fetchall()
       cursor.execute(query)
       result = cursor.fetchall()
    if commit:
       conn.commit()
       conn.rollback()
    cursor.close()
    return result
yelp_conn = open_conn()
```

Part I - 1.1 Database structure

Here is the Entity-Relationship diagram of the database. The attributes are not shown because there are too many for some of the tables. Instead, they can be find in the following figure illustrating the relational model.



Here is the relational model of the database. Primary keys are marked as orange and foreign keys are marked as blue. Also the arrows indicate the reference relations between the tables.



Part I - 1.2 Data cleaning

First some sanity checks and consistency checks were performed on the yelp database. The data in the database should follow rules and should be consistent with each other. After studying the relationship models in of it, we performed the following checks and cleaning:

- Logical time checks: review or becoming an elite member can not occur before yelp was founded or from the future. - Logic consistency checks: a user can not leave a review before creating the account, a user can not become an elite member before becoming a yelp user, people should not check in at a business outside open hours, and the reviews written by each user should be in consistent with that in the user table.

We first got the queries ready, then came up with the following indices to accelerate the running of queries. As we are going to time the execution commands, they are added before further discussion, as shown in 1.2.1. After that in 1.2.2, we will introduce the checking queries and the measures taken to deal with the inconsistency and broken data.

1.2.1 Indexing the sanity check queries

To allow for faster queries additional indices were added to some tables in the database. This includes:

- adding one to the year column in the table elite years to speed up query6
 - o create index idxyear on eliteyears(year)
- adding one to the yelping_since column in the user table
 - o create index idxyelpingsince on user(yelping_since)

- creating new columns in the hours table to split the hours column into date, opening time and closing time and creating an index for each of these
 - create index idx*day*of*week on hours(day*of_week)
- creating new columns in the checkin table to split the date column into date of week and time and creating an index for each of these
 - create index idxdayofweek on hours(dayof_week)
- creating new columns in the review table to split the date column into year, month, day columns and scrapping the time because its always 00:00:00
 - select count(*) from review where substring_index(date, ' ', -1) != '00:00:00'; #returns 0

```
index_1_1 = "create index idx_year on elite_years(year);"
index_1_2 = "create index idx_yelping_since on user(yelping_since);"

executeQuery(yelp_conn, index_1_1, returnResult=False)

executeQuery(yelp_conn, index_1_2, returnResult=False)

()
```

index2 is too long to execute here. It uses a procedure to create a new hour table with openning and closing time as seperate columns, so we do not need to parse the time column to retrieve the openning and closing tome. In fact, we think it is a bad practice in the original database to put these two in the same column as it violates 1NF. index3 as shown below, creates indexes for this new table:

```
index_3_1 = "create index idx_day_of_week on hours_new(day_of_week);"
index_3_2 = "create index idx_opening_time on hours_new(opening_time);"
index_3_3 = "create index idx_closing_time on hours_new(closing_time);"
executeQuery(yelp_conn, index_3_1, returnResult=False)
executeQuery(yelp_conn, index_3_2, returnResult=False)

()

()
```

Again, index4 creates a new table based on checkin table which creates seperated columns for time digits.

This <code>index5</code> series, create the indexes for the new check_in table:

```
index_5_1 = "create index idx_day_of_week on checkin_new(day_of_week)"

index_5_2 = "create index idx_opening_time on checkin_new(checkin_time)"

executeQuery(yelp_conn, query_5_1)

executeQuery(yelp_conn, query_5_2)
```

1.2.2 Sanity/consistency check and cleaning

1. Check that no review is from the future or before Yelp's founding

```
query_1 = "SELECT id, date FROM review WHERE unix_timestamp(date) <= unix_timestamp('2004-10-01')\
    OR unix_timestamp(date) >= unix_timestamp('2018-01-01');"

%time result_1 = executeQuery(yelp_conn, query_1)
result_1

CPU times: user 1.85 ms, sys: 2.5 ms, total: 4.36 ms
Wall time: 2.75 s

(('0389-gqbeGoMmPJbNzNT5w', datetime.datetime(2004, 9, 15, 0, 0)),
    ('PbIY2aIyszb6he6J-ey67w', datetime.datetime(2004, 7, 22, 0, 0)))
```

This shows 2 accounts that were created before Yelp's founding in October 2004.

Timing analysis: As shown in the result the query runs in about 3 seconds as shown in the output. When we delete the keys and indexes, the out put is like this:

Python

Therefore the keys and indexes bring about 5 times improvement in running speed.

This query deletes the illegel records:

```
Python
clean_1 = "DELETE FROM review WHERE unix_timestamp(date) <= unix_timestamp('2004-10-01')\</pre>
          OR unix_timestamp(date) >= unix_timestamp('2018-01-01');"
executeQuery(yelp_conn, clean_1)
```

2. Can't leave a review dated before account creation

```
Python
query_2 = "SELECT user.id, user.yelping_since, review.date\
           FROM (user INNER JOIN review ON user.id = review.user id)\
            WHERE user.yelping_since > review.date\
           GROUP BY user.id;"
%time result_2 = executeQuery(yelp_conn, query_2)
CPU times: user 10.7 ms, sys: 2.18 ms, total: 12.9 ms
Wall time: 41.6 s
                                                                                                                                                         Python
len(result_2)
196
```

This means these users somehow posted a review before their account was created, suggesting a glitch with their database. Here are 5 of users who have such illege review records:

```
Python
heading_2 = ("user.id", "user.yelping_since", "review.date")
displayResult(result_2[:5], heading_2)
   user.id
                                   user.yelping_since
                                                            review.date
   -58CWJ48is4duXgpvsWEGA
                                   2013-09-18 00:00:00
                                                            2008-10-23 00:00:00
   -9NfX8JO_5UVN_h1K8yOcg
                                   2015-02-12 00:00:00
                                                            2010-02-26 00:00:00
   -kEsfYKPs1_rgEWElui2Mw
                                   2015-02-14 00:00:00
                                                            2014-04-07 00:00:00
   -KP8Me2KRqO7lwKlaFL-Vg
                                   2013-10-19 00:00:00
                                                            2013-09-02 00:00:00
   09T8OU8BDhQkiU8m4vZy_A
                                   2013-10-21 00:00:00
                                                            2013-10-16 00:00:00
```

Timing analysis: It takes about 40 seconds to run the query. After we deleted all indexes and keys we ran it again by setting the time out threshold to 5 minutes, and it timed out.

This guery deletes illegal reviews:

```
Python
clean_2 = "DELETE FROM review WHERE id in\
           (SELECT review.id FROM (user INNER JOIN review ON user.id = review.user_id)\
           WHERE user.yelping_since > review.date\
           GROUP BY user.id);"
executeQuery(yelp_conn, clean_2)
```

3. Can't be elite in a year before their account was made

```
Python
query_3 = "SELECT user.id, user.yelping_since AS Date_of_yelping, elite_years.year AS Year_of_Elite\
           FROM (user INNER JOIN elite_years ON user.id = elite_years.user_id)\
           WHERE YEAR(user.yelping_since) > elite_years.year\
           GROUP BY user.id;"
%time result_3 = executeQuery(yelp_conn, query_3)
CPU times: user 993 μs, sys: 1.05 ms, total: 2.04 ms
Wall time: 728 ms
                                                                                                                                                        Python
len(result 3)
```

0

No illegal elite users records are found in the notebook.

Timing analysis: This query runs quite fast (within 1 second). However, somehow it timed out (>5min threshold we set) when it is run on a database without keys and indexes. We think it is because this query involves joining operations.

```
heading_3 = ("user.id", "user.yelping_since", "elite_year.year")
displayResult(result_3[:5], heading_3)

user.id user.yelping_since elite_year.year
```

4. Can't checkin outside open hours

Timing analysis: This query takes about 5 mins to run. After we removed the keys and indices, the run time becomes incredibly long so we shut it down.

This shows that there are many check ins that occur outside of the businesses open hours which are potentially invalid checkins, but this is not a guarantee because it is possible that the business changed their hours of operation at some point after someone checked in, resulting in the discrepency.

This also shows the need within the database for the date column in the checkin and the hours column in the hours table to be normalized by splitting into date, opening time and closing time columns as this would save computation time having to perform substring_index computations on every row. No change is made to the database to correct this because it may sometimes happen since the business may change its open hours without updating that on yelp.

5. User.review_count cannot be less than the sum of the number of reviews by a user

Timing analysis: As shown above it takes about 4min. After deleting all indexes and keys the run time was too long so and was interrupted.

This shows that the way Yelp gets the review_count number is potentially flawed since it should never count there being less reviews than the number of reviews provided for each user, unless the dataset that it was acquiring the count from was out of date.

This query updates the incorrect review_count:

6. Cannot be Elite in an invalid year

Invalid years include ones before 2004, years in the future or years they didn't post a review, tip or photo.

Timing analysis: Again this query includes joining operations, so it took very long time if the keys and indexes are removed. Overall, huge improvement can be observed when keys and indexes are applied.

In total there are 186900 entries in elite_years. 37 appear to be erroneous. This query deletes these incorrect elite records:

Part I - 1.3 Data Analysis

1.3.1 General results

Conditions for determining which reviews are SPAM:

Accuracy with WHERE review count = 1:61%

Accuracy with WHERE reviewcount = 1 AND review.useful = 0 AND review.funny = 0 AND review.cool = 0: 62%

Expanding POS tags looked at to include verbs on top of adjective and adverbs: 63%

Look at the top 100 frequently appearing words instead of 1000: 53%

Look at the top 5000 frequently appearing words instead of 1000: 66%

Reducing POS tags looked at just adjectives: 67%

Remove non-english reviews and replacing - and / with spaces: 67%

Add review.date -yelpingsince = 0: 70%

Change query to 'SELECT text FROM user join review on user.id=review.userid where averagestars = 5 or averagestars = 1': 71%

Change query to 'SELECT text FROM review JOIN user ON user.id=review.userid WHERE reviewcount = 1 AND review.useful = 0 AND review.funny = 0 AND review.cool = 0 AND review.date - yelpingsince and averagestars = 5 limit 1000': 76%

Change query to 'SELECT text FROM review JOIN user ON user.id=review.userid WHERE reviewcount = 1 AND review.useful = 0 AND review.funny = 0 AND review.cool = 0 AND review.date - yelpingsince and averagestars = 1 limit 1000': 80%

Change query to only include restaurants: 83% Change query to only include hotels: 85% Change query to only include restaurants: 85%

1.3.2 Methods

Now that we're confident that the data is sufficiently cleaned as to not produce erroneous results from our analysis outside of those of interest, we can begin performing the actual analysis of trends in the data. The trend that was analyzed is the affect different attributes about users and their reviews have on the likelihood that their review is spam. These attributes include the type of business being reviewed, the ratings of the reviews left by users, the average stars of the user, the time between account creation and and the reviewcount of the user. In order to determine if a given query returns reviews that are spam a machine learning classifier was used that implemented a bag-of-words model and applied a naive Bayes and random forest classifier onto this model. The metric we looked at to determine the liklihood that a review is spam is the accuracy of the classifier in classifying the suspected spam reviews when mixed with reviews that are not spam.

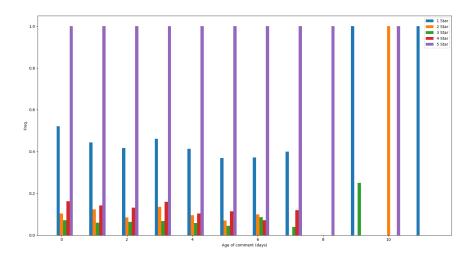
The bag-of-words model takes each spam and not spam review and looks at the words that occur most frequently in the reviews to use those as features. In this case we looked at the top 5000 most occuring adjectives and adverbs in the review to use as features. We found the adjectives and adverbs using NLTK's part of speech tagging on every review and decided to go with these parts of speech because they are the words of interest in reviews in general and provide and easy way to eliminate frequently occuring words in general that are not specific to reviews (ex. 'the' and 'it').

Classification was performed initially using only a naive Bayes classifier that is built into the NLTK library which uses Bayes theorem to determine the probability that a review is spam given the probability that each feature (word) in the review is spam. If this probability is over 50% then that review is classified as spam. Later on other classificiation algorithms were tried to see if a better classification accuracy could be achieved such as scikit-learn's random forest classifier and gaussian naive Bayes, however in general these algorithms performed worse than NLTK's naive Bayes classifier so it was the only one used to save computation time.

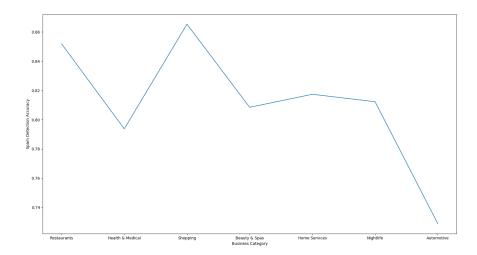
Accuracy of the spam prediction was determined by splitting the shuffled spam and ham reviews in half, with one half becoming the training set to train the classifier on, and the other half becoming the testing set which the spam classifier is tested on to determine its accuracy. The metrics analyzed were:

- Categories Restaurants, Health & Medical, Shopping, Beauty & Spas, Home Services, Nightlife and Automotive were lo
- Age Time between account creation and first review for potential bot accounts with only a single review, looked between 0 and 6
 days one day at a time
- number of reviews The minimum numbers of reviews that an accounts needs to leave to not be classified as spam
- number of results the number of rows from each query that were analyzed, this was left fixed at 1000 for speed

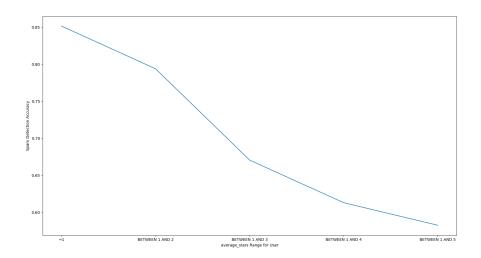
1.3.3 Results



It was found that the longer someone waited to leave their first review from account creation, the less likely it was to be spam. This was expected as any bot account that is created to simply boost up the score of a restaurant would leave a review immediately after creation, as opposed to a real user that may make their account and then not leave a review on a business until they go to one a while later. The downside of this metric is that there are also many real used that create account while at a business and leave an overly positive or negative review because its fresh in their memory.



Next, it was found that amoungst the different categories of businesses that Automotive businesses were the least likely to have spam reviews, while shopping locations were the most. Analyzing this further reveals that on average the automotive customers were more likely to have accounts with only one review for the automotive business, suggesting automotive people are less likely to be active users versus shopping locations which have legitimate users that are more active Yelp users so the ones with only one review are more likely to be spam.



It was also found that the average stars of the users' account influences the likelihood that their reviews are spam in that if a users' average stars is 5 or 1 versus if their average_stars is some other value showing that they've given other reviews besides just the top score or the lowest. This metric would miss spam users that use their account for spamming both high and low, instead of only doing one or the other.

1.3.4 Future Work

While classifiers for spam emails are quite well established, spam classifiers for reviews are more challenging because they lack many of the features that are indicative of spam such as including links or using language that suggests that the person is trying to sell something. However, this is an active area of research and there are other more complex features that have been identified that have been shown to indicate a review is spam such as: (reference)

- Using a separate gold standard dataset of honest and deceptive reviews to train with instead of using approximations from the dataset
- Look for spacial details in a review to indicate honesty (ex. terms such as "bathroom") while deceptive reviews will talk about general concepts such as why or with whom they went to the hotel

- Using Bayesian learning to analyze multiple of these metrics together to draw a more definitive conclusion
- · Checking for if there are many grammatical and spelling mistakes

1.3.5 Timing analysis

Here are the running time for the two sql queries used in the analysis part:

```
1 15:32:24 SELECT text FROM (SELECT text, business_id, user_id, d... 1000 row(s) returned 4.192 sec,
2 15:34:01 SELECT text FROM review JOIN (select id from user wh... 1000 row(s) returned 1.585 sec
```

And here are the time for not indexed database:

```
1 15:03:49 SELECT text FROM (SELECT text, business_id, user_id, d... Error Code: 1317. Query execution was interrupt... 87.406 sec
3 15:15:44 SELECT text FROM review JOIN (select id from user wh... Error Code: 1317. Query execution was interrupt... 2.820 sec
```

It can be found that indexes speed the query execution up by amazingly at least 2000%. These two queries include long joining operations, which probably is the reason for such a huge improvement.

Part II. 2.1 User control

2.1.1 Description of the problem

In real applications, the Yelp database is expected to be visited by different groups of people, including customers (users), data analyst (special users), and developers. In this project, this is further divided into five categories:

- 1. A casual user who uses the application to browse search results. These users do not need to have an account; hence, they cannot submit reviews.
- 2. Critiques that use the application to browse results just like the casual user, but they also leave reviews for places they visit. A logged in user should only be provided enough privileges to write the review.
- 3. Business analysts can use the application to produce sales reports and may want to do special data mining and analysis. They cannot perform IUD (Insert/Update/Delete) operations on the database but should have access to creating extra views on the database schema.
- 4. Developers working with this database are able to create new tables and perform data cleaning and indexing. They are allowed to perform IUD operations on the database.
- 5. The database admin who has full access over the database.

The principle of granting privilege is to guarantee that each group of people have sufficient permission in order to protect the database. First, the list of all privileges in MySQL 5.7 are listed in the Table below, from which we can choose levels for each user group.

Privilege	Meaning and Grantable Levels
ALL [PRIVILEGES]	Grant all privileges at specified access level except GRANT OPTION and PROXY.
ALTER	Enable use of ALTER TABLE. Levels: Global, database, table.
ALTER ROUTINE	Enable stored routines to be altered or dropped. Levels: Global, database, procedure.
CREATE	Enable database and table creation. Levels: Global, database, table.
CREATE ROUTINE	Enable stored routine creation. Levels: Global, database.
CREATE TABLESPACE	Enable tablespaces and log file groups to be created, altered, or dropped. Level: Global.
CREATE TEMPORARY TABLES	Enable use of CREATE TEMPORARY TABLE. Levels: Global, database.
CREATE USER	Enable use of CREATE USER, DROP USER, RENAME USER, and REVOKE ALL PRIVILEGES. Level: Global.
CREATE VIEW	Enable views to be created or altered. Levels: Global, database, table.
DELETE	Enable use of DELETE. Level: Global, database, table.
DROP	Enable databases, tables, and views to be dropped. Levels: Global, database, table.
EVENT	Enable use of events for the Event Scheduler. Levels: Global, database.
EXECUTE	Enable the user to execute stored routines. Levels: Global, database, table.
FILE	Enable the user to cause the server to read or write files. Level: Global.
GRANT OPTION	Enable privileges to be granted to or removed from other accounts. Levels: Global, database, table, procedure, proxy.
INDEX	Enable indexes to be created or dropped. Levels: Global, database, table.
INSERT	Enable use of INSERT. Levels: Global, database, table, column.
LOCK TABLES	Enable use of LOCK TABLES on tables for which you have the SELECT privilege. Levels: Global, database.
PROCESS	Enable the user to see all processes with SHOW PROCESSLIST. Level: Global.
PROXY	Enable user proxying. Level: From user to user.
REFERENCES	Enable foreign key creation. Levels: Global, database, table, column.
RELOAD	Enable use of FLUSH operations. Level: Global.
REPLICATION CLIENT	Enable the user to ask where master or slave servers are. Level: Global.
REPLICATION SLAVE	Enable replication slaves to read binary log events from the master. Level: Global.
SELECT	Enable use of SELECT. Levels: Global, database, table, column.
SHOW DATABASES	Enable SHOW DATABASES to show all databases. Level: Global.
SHOW VIEW	Enable use of SHOW CREATE VIEW. Levels: Global, database, table.
SHUTDOWN	Enable use of mysqladmin shutdown. Level: Global.
SUPER	Enable use of other administrative operations such as CHANGE MASTER TO, KILL, PURGE BINARY LOGS, SET GLOBAL, and mysqladmin debug command. Level: Global.
TRIGGER	Enable trigger operations. Levels: Global, database, table.
UPDATE	Enable use of UPDATE. Levels: Global, database, table, column.
USAGE	Synonym for "no privileges"

2.1.2 Group 1

For the first group of users, they only browse information about the business, including their opening hours, stars, reviews, without signing in so they do not need to write information into the database. In some cases, if the app allows some specific types of anonymous communications, such as marking a review as "cool" or "useful" by a visitor, then the permission should be extended to allow for modification of the count of these tags. However, in this project we assume that the user are not allowed to perform any operations except exploring. Hereby we only grant "SELECT" privilege to the first group of user, which we call "user1":

```
DROP USER IF EXISTS 'user1';
CREATE USER user1;
GRANT SELECT ON yelp_db.* TO 'user1';
```

2.1.3 Group 2

For the second type of user, they are different from casual users in that they may leave reviews or tips on a business. They are logged-in users, so they can interact with other reviews or tips. Therefore, they are granted global SELECT privilege, INSERT on the review and tip table, UPDATE on certain columns in the business table, and table-wise UPDATE on user table. The SQL query is shown as follows, similarly we call this User2:

```
DROP USER IF EXISTS 'user2';

CREATE USER user2;

GRANT SELECT ON yelp_db.* TO 'user2';

GRANT INSERT ON yelp_db.review TO 'user2';

GRANT INSERT ON yelp_db.tip TO 'user2';

GRANT UPDATE (stars) ON yelp_db.business TO 'user2';

GRANT UPDATE (review_count) ON yelp_db.business TO 'user2';

GRANT UPDATE ON yelp_db.user TO 'user2';
```

2.1.4 Group 3

Business analysts are special casual users. Here we assume they are not logged in so they are not expected to change any contents in the database. Therefore, we only add some view-related privileges to this group of users besides those granted to group 1:

```
DROP USER IF EXISTS 'user3';
CREATE USER user3;
GRANT SELECT, CREATE VIEW, SHOW VIEW ON yelp_db.* TO 'user3';
```

2.1.5 Group 4

Group 4 corresponds to normal developers. These people are in charge of the visiting, development and maintenance of database. Therefore we grant them full IUD privileges on the whole database. Also, in case they need to perform automated operations, query optimization or concurrency control, we also grant them with view, routine(function, procedure), index and lock permissions. The SQL queries are as follows:

```
DROP USER IF EXISTS 'user4';

CREATE USER user4;

GRANT ALTER ROUTINE, CREATE ROUTINE, EXECUTE, # routine related

CREATE VIEW, SHOW VIEW, # view related

CREATE, ALTER, INDEX, REFERENCES, # tables, indexes and keys

DELETE, DROP, INSERT, SELECT, UPDATE # basic operations including IUD

ON yelp_db.* TO 'user4';
```

2.1.6 Group 5

Group 5 is the database administrator, so its privilege is all but GRANT and PROXY options, which should only be done using the root user. In practical use only these two operations should be done using root user in order to prevent abuse or unexpected threats to the database. The SQL queries are as follows:

```
DROP USER IF EXISTS 'user5';
CREATE USER user5;
GRANT ALL ON yelp_db.* TO 'user5';
```